

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Maryann Deyling, and I am a student from New Haven at the Yale School of Public Health.

I stand in support of S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

I care about HUSKY For Immigrants because I understand the wide-reaching public health benefits of expanding access to healthcare for children. This issue is particularly urgent during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As a volunteer in the Medical Debt and Insurance Counseling division at the [HAVEN Free Clinic](#) in New Haven, which primarily serves low-income, undocumented adults, I have witnessed the distress that comes with trying to access basic medical care and pay medical bills as an undocumented immigrant. At the clinic, we assist individuals with enrolling in Yale New Haven Health's plan, an alternative coverage option without a citizenship requirement. This option only partially fills in the gap that is created by restricting access to HUSKY for the Connecticut immigrant community. At the clinic, I regularly speak with parents who are deeply concerned about being unable to pay medical bills for themselves and their children.

Opening access to HUSKY would reduce a significant source of anxiety and real financial harm and improve the health of adults, their children, and their communities. By providing preventive care to the [13,000 undocumented children](#) across Connecticut, the state would see significant long-term savings. As one [pediatrician described](#), treatable childhood diseases can easily turn into complex conditions costing taxpayers over \$1 million for a single child. Ultimately, if we hope to reduce inequities and safeguard the health of our communities, we must expand HUSKY beyond age 18. According to [Connecticut Public Radio](#), the estimated uninsurance rate for undocumented immigrants is 52%. This is roughly 9 times higher than the state uninsurance rate of 5.9%. This gap represents a significant equity issue that has only become more urgent with COVID-19. Undocumented immigrants often live with [multiple family members](#) and hold jobs that put them at higher risk of COVID-19 and other occupational hazards. We must not leave a large portion of our communities who remain on the frontlines of the pandemic behind.

I support S.B. 284, and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards expanding access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,

Maryann Deyling